

Diligent Recruitment Plan

Section 422(b)(7) of the Social Security Act requires that the state provide for the diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are sought. There are no prohibitive policies or laws in Missouri that limit the state's ability to recruit foster and adoptive parents who reflect the diversity of children in Children's Division's custody. In Missouri, targeted recruitment strategies occur statewide, initiated by the local office based on the needs of each child as well as general recruitment efforts throughout the state.

To plan for years 2020-2024, Missouri will continue to take a collaborative approach of engaging private and public partners. Missouri will partner with the following groups to illicit input on the most effective collaboration for recruitment planning:

- Family Resource Centers in Kansas City, St. Louis, Jefferson City, Columbia, Springfield, Rolla, Macon, and Hannibal
- Resource Team of Southwest Missouri
- Cornerstones of Care Recruitment and Retention Privatization Contractor in Kansas City and the Northwest Region
- Global Orphan Project
- Raise the Future
- AdoptUSKids
- Recruitment and Retention Workgroup
- CFSR Advisory Committee
- Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Board
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids
- Native American partners workgroup
- Faith Based partners throughout Missouri

Statewide meetings for the recruitment committee in 2020-2024 will include the representatives that have been identified by the groups. In addition to the representatives identified, the team is comprised of standing members including:

- Staff from the Raise the Future of Missouri
- Communications Director from the Department of Social Services
- Foster Care/Adoption staff of all levels
- Quality Assurance/COA Manager and a QA/QI Field Staff Representative
- Quality Improvement Unit Manager
- Privatization contract representative
- Private case management contract representative

2020-2024 report out and planning will occurred as part of the ARTS (Adoption Recruitment Training and Supports) Team agenda. This is a quarterly central meeting attended by partners sharing this common focus. This meeting is attended by both private and public partners as well as contractors such as the Raise the Future and representatives from the Adoption Resource Centers and Recruitment and Retention Contractor.

Data Gathering:

The following data was compiled to enhance recruitment efforts for the 2020-2024 planning years. In addition to these data points Quality Assurance staff provides local reports upon request such as zip code information or school district codes and specific point in time demographic information to tailor information to specific recruitment activities and the groups in attendance.

Statewide Resource Family Data as of 4/30/23

Foster and Adoptive Homes				
	Total Homes		Homes with Availability	
Region	Foster Homes	Adoptive Homes	Foster Homes	Adoptive Homes
Kansas City	252	1021	128	346
Northeast	584	966	373	265
Northwest	287	687	237	235
Southeast	518	1516	237	226
Southwest	798	1628	502	559
St. Louis	476	1114	268	253
Total	2915	6932	1745	1884

Foster Parent Race by Region – Total homes							
Region	White	Black/ African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi- Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	247	95	1	3	0	2	46
Northeast	886	62	1	0	1	2	59
Northwest	436	14	2	1	0	5	40
Southeast	767	36	1	1	2	0	57
Southwest	1216	25	8	5	1	7	106
St. Louis	355	289	1	6	1	6	25
Total	3907	521	14	16	5	22	333

Foster Parent Race by Region - of homes with availability							
Region	White	Black/ African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi- Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	135	42	0	2	0	1	23
Northeast	544	46	0	0	1	2	31
Northwest	226	5	1	0	0	3	15
Southeast	583	36	1	0	2	0	40
Southwest	765	16	5	4	1	3	60
St. Louis	188	169	1	6	1	2	9
Total	2441	314	8	12	5	11	178

Adoptive Parent Race by Region – Total homes							
Region	White	Black/ African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi- Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	958	386	4	5	3	10	186
Northeast	1353	89	11	1	0	4	152
Northwest	1021	15	1	0	0	4	45
Southeast	2305	76	3	0	0	0	165
Southwest	2476	27	4	3	4	14	256
St. Louis	851	648	3	2	2	6	106
Total	8964	1241	26	11	9	38	910

Adoptive Parent Race by Region - of homes with availability							
Region	White	Black/ African American	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Multi- Racial	Unknown
Kansas City	342	129	3	2	1	1	58
Northeast	364	22	1	0	0	2	41
Northwest	332	20	1	0	0	6	33
Southeast	344	21	1	0	0	0	26
Southwest	906	8	1	2	0	5	98
St. Louis	205	130	2	1	6	0	19
Total	2493	330	9	5	7	14	275

Note: When homes are dually licensed, we provide counts of each type of resource home unduplicated

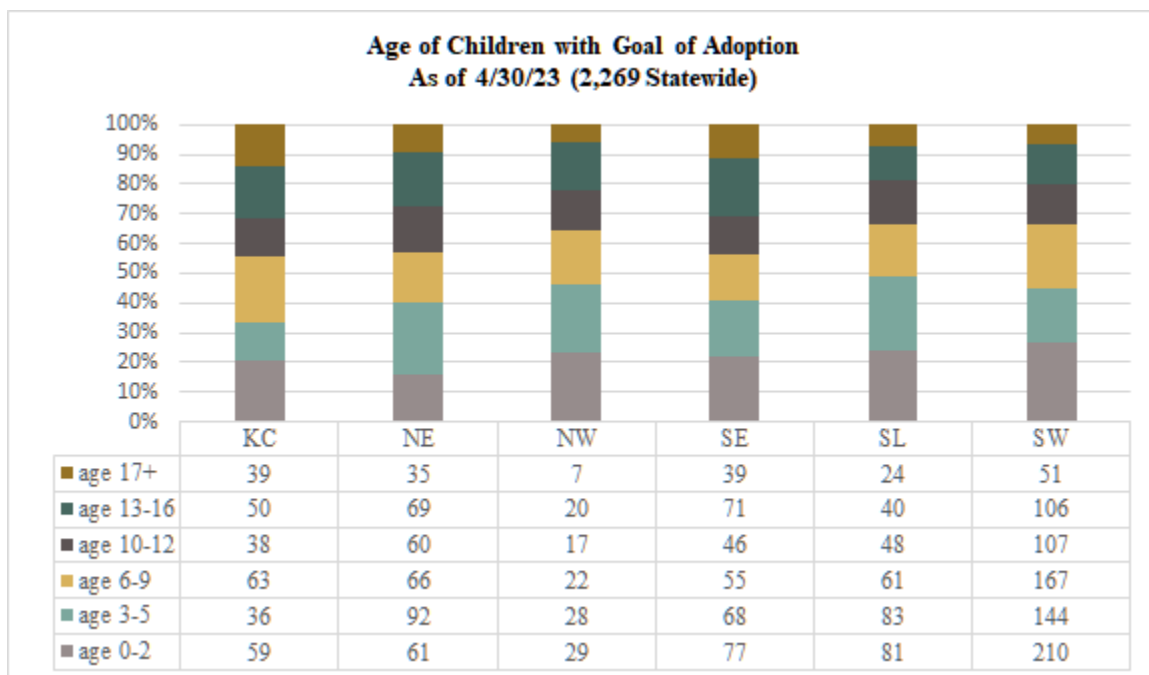
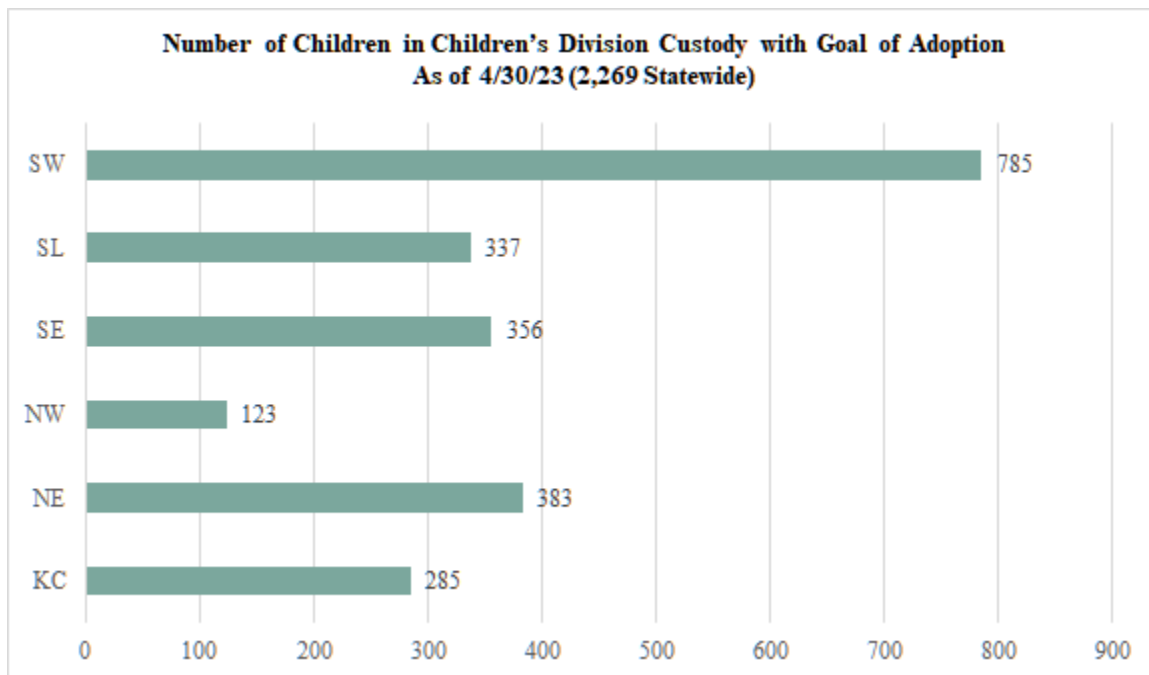
Statewide Alternative Care Population Data:

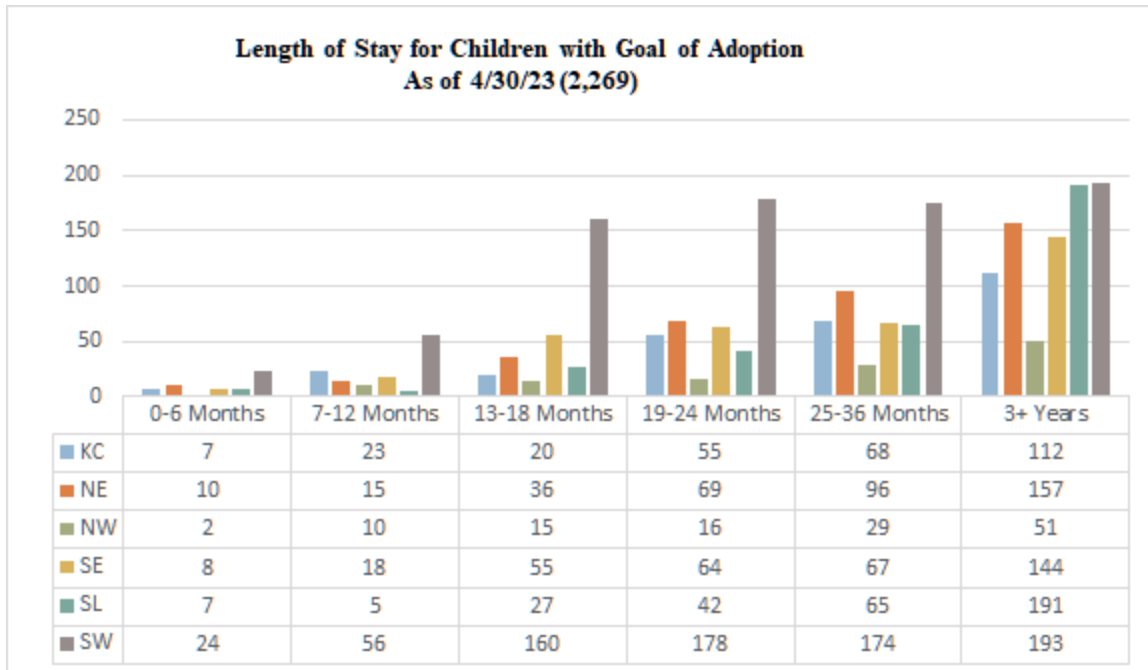
Total Alternative Care Population as of 4/30/23 (13,149)	
Gender	
Male	6703
Female	6446
Race	
White	8948
Black/ African American	2669
American Indian	56
Asian	28
Native Hawaiian	12
Multi-Racial	287
Unknown	1149
Age	
0-2	2837
3-5	2130
6-9	2174
10-12	1493
13-16	2894
17+	1621

Missouri does not have any federally recognized Indian tribes, which is reflected in the data above. Native children are placed with relatives who share their heritage whenever possible, with a member of their identified Tribe, or a Native American foster home. In some cases, children are placed out of state with relatives. Children's Division recognizes the need to develop families within the tribal community whether these families are within Missouri or are in adjoining states where culture may be preserved. A workgroup has been formed for 2020-2024 to collaborate ideas for the most effective targeted recruitment strategies to increase Native American foster and adoptive families. This workgroup is comprised of current Native American foster parents, NA partners from community Indian Centers, NA staff, and staff who have an interest in the NA community. Much work is being done to accurately capture the population of Native children, to assure culture is being preserved and resources are available to place children. During 2020 Missouri CD created Legal Aspects; Understanding and Applying ICWA training for all staff to complete. This training is a comprehensive and interactive training exploring ICWA law and regulations and the application. It amplifies the need to keep children within their NA communities to foster growth.

During 2020 and continuing through 2024, Missouri will continue to work to build upon the relationships with tribes in adjoining states which represent the population of Native American's in Missouri and continue to build relationships with our Native American partners to join in delivering

comprehensive services to our Native American families. (See Consultation and Coordination between Tribes and States section).

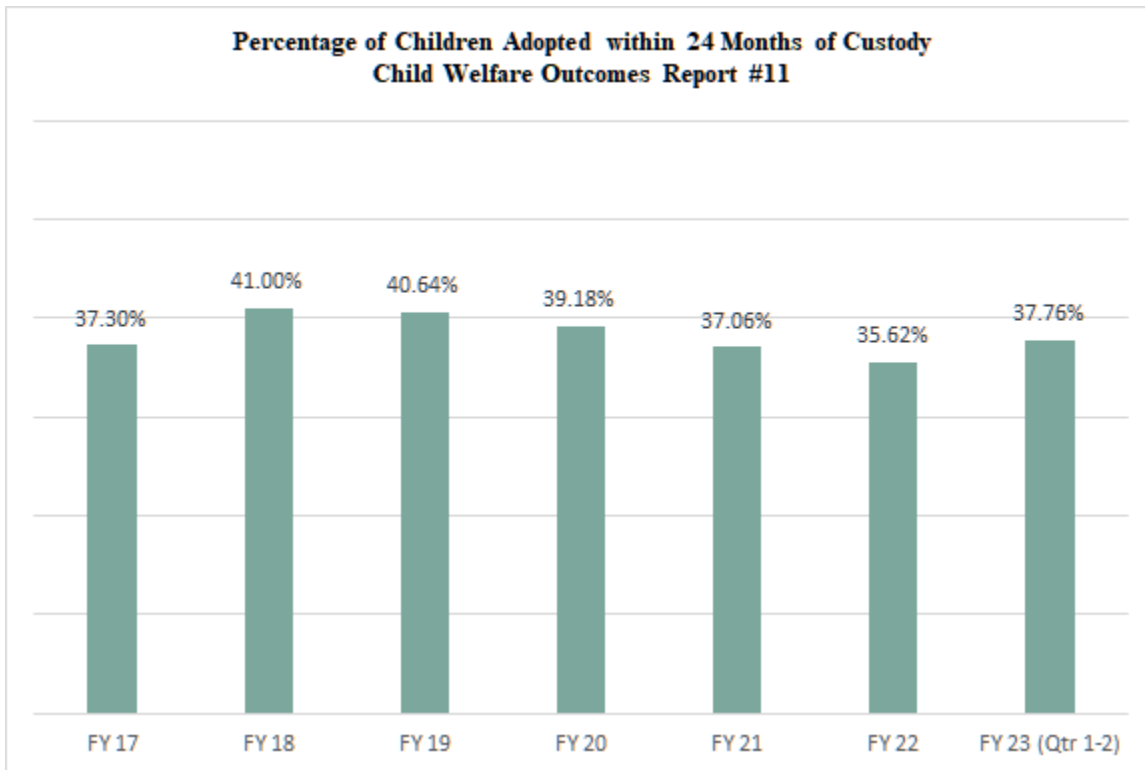




Placement Types of Children with Goal of Adoption by Region As of 4/30/23 (2,269)						
Region	Adoptive Home	Foster Home	Relative Home	Residential Facility	Other	Total
KC	8	142	102	11	22	285
NE	1	189	160	24	9	383
NW	5	53	50	5	10	123
SE	2	134	150	41	29	356
SL	6	159	129	29	14	337
SW	10	347	348	55	25	785
Total	32	1024	939	165	109	2269

Of the children available for adoption who are not currently in an adoptive home 35.2% of the children are considered in a pre-adoptive home with their foster parent, relative or kinship provider, up slightly down 35.8% in last year's report.

As outlined in the Diligent Recruitment plan, the Children's Division has devised several strategies aimed at continuing to meet the goal for all children who exit care to a finalized adoption do so within 24 months of entry.



Ongoing Recruitment Efforts:

The Division has refined and expanded the social media presence utilizing the DSS Facebook, DSS Twitter, the Social Services homepage. Children's profiles are being posted on the DSS Facebook once a week throughout the year as well as a few times a month on the DSS Twitter. Many of our community partners are reposting these children on their agency and personal Facebook pages and re-tweeting on their twitter feeds. The MO Heart Gallery website is being used more consistently to promote foster care, adoption and events specific to recruitment and support of resource parents. The MO Heart Gallery has gone from less than 50 children on the Website to over 150 children. Video segments/digital stories continue to be added to a number of profiles featured on the Gallery. Raise the Future and AdoptUSKids websites are featuring the same children and increasing their viewing audience. The multifaceted approach includes:

- Person to person contacts by current foster/adoptive parents with potential foster/adoptive parents which has proven to be the single best method for recruitment. Social media features make information sharing seamless for resource parents to share with their social groups/contacts,
- Recruitment of distinct individuals based on profession or prior involvement with a child as mandated by a child's special need,

- Monthly Adoption Heart Gallery Highlight presentations through WebEx for staff to present their children to other staff and potential families,
- Community informational meetings and events to educate about foster care and adoption (shopping malls, fairs, libraries, bookstores) featuring the Missouri Heart Gallery and recruitment materials,
- Adoption Information On-Line Webinars to educate about Missouri foster care and adoption providing a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri,
- The news media (newspapers, radio station, television station, cable network station, special interest bulletins), including expanding Wednesday's child features into the Springfield television market,
- Displaying flyers, pamphlets, posters, handouts and electronic web notices and social media posts,
- Coordination with faith-based partners in communities throughout the state to feature photos and profiles of children currently waiting for adoption and informing churches of the need within their community for foster and adoptive families by providing zip code specific information to the faith-based partners for recruitment,
- Coordination with faith-based partners also has resulted in increased support of relative and non-relative resource families and through this support has increased interest in providing care as a foster parent,
- Distribution of informational packets and foster parent information in Heart Gallery promotion materials at recruitment and community events,
- Utilizing AdoptUSKids site and Raise the Future websites where Missouri's waiting children are featured in addition to the MO Heart Gallery site,
- Celebrating National Foster Care month (May) and National Adoption month (November) and including media campaigns and print materials for recruitment,
- Linking Hearts Event in Rolla MO which is a collaborative effort between the Phelps County Community Partnership and the Panhellenic Society at Missouri S and T University. This is an effort to have families interact with available children and receive information about foster care and adoption
- National Recruitment Saturday Celebration in St. Louis County and Jackson County, and
- Journey Home Bus Tours to heighten awareness and recruit families.

In 2021, the Division partnered with Raise the Future to create and offer a digital Heart Gallery display to be used in the community as a new recruitment opportunity. This digital Heart Gallery display can be used in the same venues, i.e. churches, school functions, and community events as the Traveling Heart Gallery display. The digital Heart Gallery display has been updated through the year and offers a better user friendly format.

Policy and practice changes that were incorporated in FY 2022 included:

- The Professional Family Development Plan, Resource Parent Quarterly Home Visit Checklist and Quarterly Summary, and the Resource Home and Safety checklist forms have been merged into an updated Quarterly Home Visit Guide.

- Introduction of the resource provider annual in-service training entitled “Understanding and Managing Trauma Symptoms without Medication.”

During 2020 the Division took a closer look at the Heart Gallery website and partnered with the Raise the Future to create a new web design with some additional features. The website added the ability for the public to request information on how they can get involved by becoming a volunteer photographer, Hair Stylist, or host an event. This has opened the door for more communication that has then created more of an inquiry on how to become a foster or adoptive family.

Photographs are printed twice a year, for the traveling Heart Gallery. Each region receives an 8x10 image of the children who are featured in the Gallery for display at their events. For children to be listed on Raise the Future website, staff complete an on-line registration or relist if a child is already on the site. This registration will register the child with the Raise the Future, AdoptUSKids and the Missouri Heart Gallery websites at the same time as well as the DSS Facebook page and DSS twitter. Raise the Future changed their name from The Adoption Exchange in 2020 and designed a new look for their website. The addition of video segments/digital stories continue to be added to a number of profiles featured on the Heart Gallery.

Continued coordination occurs with Raise the Future to:

- Further expand their role in recruitment of foster and adoptive parents for youth.
- Increase connections for youth in foster care and awaiting adoption through targeted recruitment meet and greets with waiting youth and waiting families with similar interests
- Increased features of video/digital profiles on Raise the Future and Heart Gallery websites to bring the waiting children’s personalities and interests to life.
- Provide Adoption Information On-Line Webinars a few times a year to educate about Missouri foster care and adoption providing a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri.

RPC (Resource Parent Curriculum) from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network will continue to be offered throughout 2023.

Outreach was expanded by current foster and adoptive parents in recruitment of new resources using the demonstrated strategies by partners on the Diligent Recruitment Team. These strategies were refined based on the information provided by the data shared to assure families are being recruited consistent with the demographic makeup and needs of the alternative care population and in turn the subgroup of that population awaiting permanency through an adoptive home.

Additional electronic or media profiles were developed and presented in local television markets and subsequently posted on the Heart Gallery website and social media platforms for featured children. More Faith Based partners are coming forward wanting to offer their time and equipment to produce video segments/digital stories for the children seeking an adoptive home.

Continued partnership with Faith and Community Partners to:

- Ensure outreach to all communities representative of the youth population in care.

- Accomplish outreach to neighborhoods for development of resource homes where children are removed to ensure children can remain in close proximity to family, school and social connections.
- Recruit families committed to preserving Native American/Alaskan Native culture for children/youth with such cultural background which is being accomplished through partnership of the ICWA workgroup.
- Support the Recruitment and Retention contractor in their MOU with the keep in recruiting, supporting and maintain resource homes who are provided support from their church congregation.
- Producing video segments/digital stories for the children seeking an adoptive home.

Progress to achieve goal of 50% or more placement rate of children in foster care with relatives, CD is focusing significant energy on relative assessment, training and supports. Children's Division averaged 1934 relative licensed homes in 2022. In early 2019 a designated Relative First Program Development Specialist was added to the team in CD Central Office to spearhead this work. In 2018 Missouri was fortunate to have the National Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA), through the Missouri chapter, facilitate a summit with Missouri CD and current Therapeutic Program Care providers to explore expansion of Therapeutic Care to Relative Providers. By late 2018 the local FFTA Chapter and Missouri Children's Division had developed a process to pilot provision of these services under the existing contract structure. In 2019 there were three active cases of youth residing in Relative Treatment Foster Care (TFC) homes. The goal of the pilot was to reach up to 10 cases and determine the most effective strategies and processes to bring a Relative TFC Program into an available service option for all relative children requiring a higher level of care at entry or as stepdown from residential care. As of February 2023, this goal has been met and there were a total of 34 active relative TFC placements.

Incorporation of Signs of Safety into resource licensing which continues with Signs of Safety maps to be used in resource licensing and assurance all information necessary to meet licensing standards is captured on the map or in our FACES system. Work is ongoing to include Signs of Safety philosophy into policy and practice development to keep up with the field work being accomplished.

In November 2018 the Children's Division was accepted as a pilot site for the National Training Development Curriculum project through Spaulding for Children who was awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement from the Children's Bureau. The grant is being used to develop and evaluate a state of the art training program to prepare foster and adoptive parents to effectively parent children exposed to trauma and to provide these families with ongoing skill development needed to understand and promote healthy child development. As a participant of the project Missouri will have access to a free, comprehensive curriculum that has been thoroughly evaluated to be used to prepare resource parents. The training includes a foster, relative and adoptive track. As a result of this notification, Missouri decided to put energy being spent on refinement of pre-service and in-service trainings into development of the training with NTDC, in the meantime continuing with the existing training curriculum, STARS.

Efforts to heighten awareness of the need for foster and adoptive providers in National Adoption Month occurred in November. Social media was maximized for this effort with children or sibling groups featured every day in November, along with interviews of adoptive parents and staff in an effort to

recruit. Adoption month bracelets are shared with community partners as conversation starters at each of the events held in local jurisdictions.

As a result of the Family First Legislation passage Missouri CD is contracting with ParentLink to provide Kinship Navigator Services to relative providers. The navigator services are available to both formal and informal kinship providers. The contract with ParentLink requires a steering committee to include management of Missouri's Adoption or Family Resource Centers to assure combined efforts for relative care providers and cross pollination of support or retention services provided to relative and non-relative resource families where appropriate.

Also as a result of the Family First Legislation, the Division is focusing heavily on recruitment of resource homes to assure resources are available for elevated needs children when they enter care in place of the need for residential care and also as a strategy to discharge youth from residential treatment and assure timely permanency. Jackson Co. began a right sizing residential group consisting of Children's Division representatives, Foster Care Case Management Partners as well as the Privatized Recruitment and Retention Contractor to develop solutions and strategies for developing family settings for kids. The group has worked to assure Department of Mental Health services are accessed, connected relatives and foster families to Tools of Choice training through DMH to prepare and equip them for elevated needs youth.

Additional efforts in 2022 include:

- Awarding the RFP for Adoption and Foster Care Recruitment Services which will increase presentation of available children for adoption on the AdoptUSKids, Raise the Future and Missouri Heart Gallery Websites as the primary goals. Secondary goals will be use of the profiles written and photos taken for each of these sites for targeted recruitment for children awaiting adoption. The awarded RFP will increase the numbers of digital stories or media spotlights to be added to each of the sites also to bring the children's spirits, personalities and interests to light to increase matching efforts.
- Expansion and training of staff in use of the AdoptUSKids website for reverse matching to identify potential adoptive families across the nation for our children who wait. In 2020 two trainings were conducted with staff to demonstrate the use of and potential for this tool in identifying families. Each of these activities designed to reduce time to permanency for children for whom an adoptive placement is being sought.
- Amplified Faith Based Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive homes through a fulltime Faith Based Liaison within the Children's Division with planned outreach to large church congregations to focus on recruitment as well as support of resource parents for retention.
- Focus Groups as part of the Survey Project with the National Council for Adoption and Northeastern University to inform the project data and allow for refinements to the retention strategies of the Children's Division and its private contractor.
- Development of new messaging consistent with Family First to wrap services around intact families as the first recruitment strategy, followed by support of relative providers through the Navigators and Family Resource Centers and enlistment of community volunteers, recruitment of resource parents for elevated needs children and youth to allow for stable caregiving for

children entering care with elevated needs or stepping out of the residential setting to a resource home and support for each of these placement types.

- Continued recruitment efforts that began with the Adoption Placemat work under the direction of the Adoption Program Specialist. The adoption placemat is intended to increase the number of prospective adoptive resources so all children in need of a permanent home have an adoptive family to achieve timely permanency when they cannot be reunified with their family. This work will be achieved through the following steps; 1) increased support to field staff to assure accurate capture of goals and pre-adoptive placement to assure the waiting child pool is accurately identified, 2) use recruitment strategies of features on social media, websites, web matching events, targeted recruitment efforts and maximizing involvement of Child Placing Agency partners, 3) assure staff are using the tools available for reverse matching through AdoptUSKids and finally 4) assuring petitions for TPR and adoption are filed promptly to assure timely permanency.

New Efforts in 2020-2024

- Use information from the NCFA survey data including focus group information to identify the most effective venues for recruitment of resource parents and assure information is available in each of these venues.
- Offer On-Line Adoption Information webinars to the public that provide a basic overview of adoption in the state of Missouri.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the new messaging or community ask for family support, respite providers as well as foster and adoptive families being developed in 2020 to assure the messaging resounds with potential supports and resources and make refinements as indicated.
- Focus on recruiting families who can support reunification of children through support of biological family.
- Work with National Training Development Curriculum project to tailor the training message specific to Missouri populations and identified training or support gaps. Assuring training can be delivered to all populations regardless of reading level or language requirements. Develop the Missouri specific portions of the NTDC to assure each family receives training and supports in a consistent manner.
- Continued and ongoing training of staff use of the reverse search of the AdoptUSKids website to identify potential families for children needing an adoptive home concurrent with searches of Missouri homes for placement, breaking down jurisdictional barriers.
- Determine a methodology for comparing alternative care population and waiting child population to determine the number of homes needed and preparation level needed for those homes to assure capacity for children of all need levels using and refining current data available as included in this plan as well as the data reports in the Recruitment and Retention Contract section of the APSR
- Expanded use of Extreme Recruitment and Family Finding efforts to assure children in need of a permanency other than reunification can have that permanency with family.

During 2022, we have used the information from the National Council for Adoption (NCFA) survey data in the work being done with recruitment, licensure and support of resource homes in Missouri. This work has been accomplished through the work of the Diligent Recruitment and Recruitment and

Retention Reboot workgroups and in collaboration with the Recruitment and Retention Contractor and the partner agencies. Because of the Division's involvement with NCFA and the pilot with National Training Development Curriculum (NTDC), Missouri is working with these groups to move the survey into two additional regions, Southwest and Southeast Missouri, for evaluation to take place in comparison of the NTDC to a newly developed Missouri curriculum being used in those two regions. This evaluation will also allow a third prong evaluation through the comparison group for the evaluation being conducted for the control group for NTDC, which is our current STARS/PRIDE region in the Northeast and St. Louis. In 2022, we gained valuable learning from this combined evaluation, which afforded us the opportunity to identify the best training and supports strategies for Missouri resource families.

During 2020, Children's Division was committed to evaluating recruitment messaging and creating two new recruitment videos. The new Foster Parent video was released during National Foster Parent month in May with the link pasted below. The new adoption video was released during National Adoption month in November with the link also pasted below.

Foster Parent Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_P5m-PUc-Q

Adoption Video https://youtu.be/F_P5m-PUc-Q

During 2022 we continued to conduct trainings for field staff on use of the AdoptUSKids application to accomplish a cross match of families with available waiting youth. Staff found value in this training and identified many potential placements for staff to follow up with after training.

In the 2022 year, Missouri continued to meet our goal of expanding use of Extreme Recruitment and Family Finding which is executed from the Family Resource Centers.

During 2020-2024 we will continue to strategize on how to achieve the goal of over 50% of placements with relatives knowing that placements with relatives are more stable, and reunification occurs more expeditiously than placements with foster parents. With the addition of the Missouri Kinship Navigator program through Parentlink and the Missouri Family Resource Centers, needs of families are being clearly identified allowing ongoing work in 2020-2024 to focus on consistent delivery of services to address the identified needs as well as striving to have equal access throughout the state to every available resource.

Children's Division has also been very pleased with our work that began in 2019 of developing and expanding Foster Care Neighborhoods around the state. In these neighborhoods, licensed resource families live in adjacent homes within one neighborhood that is provided support by a licensing agency. The families are provided the necessary support to maintain placements and be successful with children by their neighbor foster parents as well as therapeutic supports, and training provided by the support agency. This model has resulted in foster care placements made into these neighborhoods being stable and the children and youth having the opportunity to build supportive relationships with their foster family, the neighborhood and the support staff. In 2020-2024 we will continue work with the existing neighborhoods and assist with development of any additional neighborhoods agencies are interested in sponsoring.

Missouri has participated in all of the Adoption Call to Action Summits hosted by the Children's Bureau.

Following the initial summit, Missouri Children's Division was committed to continuing the goals of:

- Expanding Extreme Recruitment, 30 Days to Family and Family Finding,
- Messaging for recruitment of foster and adoptive families as well as individuals willing to address the needs of the Division and the families we serve
- Increasing relative placements consistent with the goals of this Diligent Recruitment plan while focusing the recruitment on the populations identified in our data.

Children's Division will continue to focus on the work of Missouri Permanency Attorney Initiative to reduce time to permanency. The Division has recognized that delays to permanency through reunification, adoption or guardianship exist due to a lack of legal representation to resolve the cases. The permanency attorney initiative has been touted as moving cases more quickly to permanency. The goal of this action item was to determine if our assumptions were accurate and what refinements needed to be put in place to result in optimal success. Work was ongoing in 2020 to quantify the outcomes. We began our work in developing logic for the comparison and tested the comparison of cases being served by a permanency attorney vs. cases not served by a permanency attorney. In this comparison, we found a significant reduction in the number of days to permanency for children managed by our foster care case management contractor in our largest region in Missouri.

We began to work on comparing the population served by the Children's Division in the St. Louis area consistent with the work completed for the contracted providers. This comparison continues. The intent of this exercise is to use data to support and advocate for additional attorneys to assure timely permanency.

In SFY22 with 1,577 adoptions finalized, this demonstrated a increase in adoptions in Missouri.

SFY	Number of Finalized Adoptions
SFY 14	1,250
SFY 15	1,315
SFY 16	1,524
SFY 17	1,588
SFY 18	1,740
SFY 19	1,826
SFY 20	1,740
SFY 21	1,513
SFY 22	1,577

Work will continue in 2020-2024 on the goals identified in this plan and collaborative efforts outlined.